

## You are in the Earth of Me

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Archive Warnings:	<a href="#">Graphic Depictions Of Violence</a> , <a href="#">Rape/Non-Con</a>
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Characters:	<a href="#">Jaskier</a>   <a href="#">Dandelion</a> , <a href="#">Geralt z Rivii</a>   <a href="#">Geralt of Rivia</a> , <a href="#">Rience (The Witcher)</a> , <a href="#">Eskel (The Witcher)</a> , <a href="#">Priscilla (The Witcher)</a> , <a href="#">Original Witcher Character(s)</a> , <a href="#">Witcher Aubry (The Witcher)</a> , <a href="#">Remus (The Witcher)</a> , <a href="#">Vesemir (The Witcher)</a> , <a href="#">Aiden (The Witcher)</a> , <a href="#">Lambert (The Witcher)</a> , <a href="#">Radovid V Srogi</a>   <a href="#">Radovid V the Stern</a> , <a href="#">Yennefer z Vengerbergu</a>   <a href="#">Yennefer of Vengerberg</a> , <a href="#">Cirilla Fiona Elen Riannon</a> , <a href="#">Triss Merigold</a>
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# You are in the Earth of Me

by [Graymuse42](#)

## Summary

“So,” Vesemir began. “I know you weren’t sharing the details, but I don’t believe that was the plan.”

Jaskier shook his head firmly. “No, no definitely not. I- well, you know, I was going back to talk to Vissena.”

“Did you find her?”

Jaskier scowled, glancing down at his hand. “...I may have punched her.”

AKA: Jaskier time travels. And promptly incurs an apocalypse.

## Notes

Last fic of the series! Hope you're all ready!!!!

Also, huge shout out to my friend that's been letting me bounce ideas off them for this.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

# Chapter 1

It had been years since he'd known anything different.

Even the blood staining his knees wasn't different, just another failure on his part.

A failure to protect his child.

This was the fourth one.

The fourth child he couldn't protect from Rience's anger.

*Why was Rience doing this?*

*Why did he hate him so much?*

No, it wasn't hate.

Rience dug his fingers into Jaskier's hair, ignoring his cry as he hauled him away from what was left of his child, throwing him back onto the bed.

"Stop crying over that damned *parasite*," Rience growled.

It wasn't hatred.

Rience hated Jaskier's children, that much was undeniable, but what Rience felt towards Jaskier wasn't *hate*, because in order to hate him, Rience would have to see Jaskier as a *person*.

"Present for me, bitch," Rience growled, "or would you rather I bring some of my friends over to play with you?"

As if heeding his words, Jaskier felt the tell-tale signs of a portal opening up.

Rience dropped Jaskier's head, and he fell back, too scared to look at what new horror might be coming through the portal.

"...The *fuck*?" Rience asked, and *that* got Jaskier attention.

He opened his eyes, lifting his head to see-

Himself?

Another Jaskier, this one *much* older, stared at Rience, looking just as ill as Jaskier himself felt.

"Ooooh, I massively fucked up," the other Jaskier muttered, almost to himself.

“...Who the fuck are you?” Rience growled, and Jaskier didn’t know what to *do*!

The other Jaskier swallowed, but held up his hand, shaking far less than Jaskier himself was shaking. “Step back,” the other Jaskier ordered, “you know what I am, you know what I can do with my full strength. And you know that his protection will *not* extend to you. Not against me.”

Rience *growled*. “You’d kill yourself and him? To kill your own mate is suicide.”

“You’re not my mate anymore,” this other Jaskier countered, and-

*What?*

Had he gotten free?

Had-

Had he *survived* this hell?!

“Why you-“

Rience started forward, fire sprouting from his fingers, but then *vines* sprouted from the floor, wrapping around Rience and holding him still.

What the *fuck* was happening here?

“Jaskier,” the other Jaskier spoke, “I need you to come with me. Right now.”

His tone didn’t exactly hold any argument, and Jaskier did his best to get to his feet, even as the blood clung to him, staining everything he touched.

The other Jaskier’s eyes caught on the blood, and a moment of grief flashed across his face, before he turned his attention back to Rience, who was struggling to get free of the vines imprisoning him.

“We don’t have long, so the second the portal opens, I need you to jump through it, alright?” the other Jaskier spoke, and Jaskier hastily nodded.

*Anywhere* that wasn’t here was somewhere he’d much rather be right now.

If only he could have brought his child with him...

The other Jaskier shook as he kept one hand focused on the spell binding Rience, and he reached behind himself with another hand, opening a strange portal.

“ *Go*, ” he encouraged, even as Rience’s fire began to burn through the vines, snapping them.

Jaskier ran through the portal, collapsing to his knees the second he was on the other side, throwing up at the nausea as every bone in his body protested, and then the portal behind him *surged* as the other Jaskier landed.

And someone else did too.

“Shit- *Vesemir!*” the other Jaskier screamed, and Jaskier looked up to see Rience, holding the other Jaskier by the throat against the wall of whatever new room they’d ended up in- a strange room with vials and bottles and potions.

They were somewhere new.

How many years had it been?

“Whatever you’ve done, bitch,” Rience growled, “I’ll undo it. If I have to kill you now, just to keep my slut, I’ll do it. I don’t know how you broke free of me the first time, but I’ll make sure you never succeed again.”

The other Jaskier *screamed* as the hand around his throat burst into flame, but then-

Rience stumbled back, coughing.

The other Jaskier gasped in air, even as he shoved Rience off of him, conjuring more vines from the floor to aid him.

“I’m not the same helpless Omega I was when you first caught me,” he growled, even as Rience struggled once again against the vines.

There were pounding feet nearby, and Jaskier shrank against the wall, uncertain who might come through the door, whether they’d be friend or foe.

The door opened, and an older Alpha came through, a sword already drawn, and he stopped in the door.

“What the *fuck* happened?” he asked, and the other Jaskier shook his head.

“I- I can’t- I can’t hold him-“

The older Alpha stepped between both Jaskier and Rience, who once he saw the other Alpha, sighed, and stopped struggling.

“...So. That’s how it is,” he muttered, apparently unwilling to fight the Alpha.

The other Jaskier slowly lowered his hand, though he was still *clearly* waiting for Rience to try something again.

“Did you have to bring him here?” the other Alpha asked, and the other Jaskier snorted.

“I... I’m sorry, I don’t even know how I ended *up* there, I just... I couldn’t do *nothing*, ”

“Geralt brought you here a similar way,” The other Alpha muttered, his voice almost... *fond*, before he stepped forward and punched Rience, *hard*, knocking him out. “...We should probably kill him,” he commented.

“...Probably,” the other Jaskier commented, sinking to the floor and holding his head in one hand, like it was hurting him. “But killing in cold blood isn’t what Witchers do.”

“We do when it’s rapists,” the other Alpha- a Witcher?- pointed out. “Want me to do the honors this time? Or would you rather?”

The other Jaskier glanced over at Jaskier. “We- oh, fuck. You’re still bonded to him. And... based off that blood... you just lost a child, didn’t you?”

The Witcher groaned, turning around. “Right. Killing him now might kill you too, huh.”

Jaskier swallowed. “So... that’s it? He just... gets to go free?”

The other Jaskier snorted, *hard*. “*Fuck* no. Vesemir, do we still have any demeritium chains?”

“I can go check. If he rouses again, can you hold him off?” The other Jaskier nodded, but Vesemir frowned. “Where’s your *blade*, pup?”

The other Jaskier shook his head. “Sorry, I wasn’t expecting to run into trouble. Which... I unfortunately found a lot of.”

“More than this?” Vesemir chuckled, only to *groan* at the other Jaskier’s expression. “Fill me in after. Here, if he rouses, cut off his balls.”

The other Jaskier accepted the dagger Vesemir handed to him, grinning. “Don’t worry. I’ll grow a few hallucinogenic flowers just in case.”

Vesemir left the room, and the other Jaskier glanced over at Jaskier.

“...Which one?” he quietly whispered, and Jaskier swallowed.

“...Fourth,” he managed. “You... you’re me... but... not?”

“You, but from the future. Or, the present, and you’re from the past?” That made no sense, and the other Jaskier sighed. “You’re... a bit displaced. But, given... everything you just lived through, you were already displaced...”

“How long?” Jaskier interrupted.

The other Jaskier already knew what he was asking. “...it’s an estimate, of course,” he began. “Where... *when* you were, that’s... not when I was saved, the first time around. But for you... I’d imagine it’s been about six, maybe seven years you’ve lived, since you were first taken.”

Jaskier blinked, tears streaming down his face. “...you were there longer?”

The other Jaskier nodded. “...Our actual soulmate saved us after we’d been there ten years.”

Ten years?

Ten *years* of that hell?

Ten years of lost children?

He stared down at his hands, the blood dry and flaking.

All that was left of his child.

*His*, child, not Rience's.

*Never* Rience's.

"Hey, oh, oh it's going to be alright--"

"Everything still sane?" Vesemir asked, stepping back into the room, this time with cuffs in his hands, and Jaskier shrank further back against the wall, unable to tear his gaze away from the cuffs.

He *knew* what cuffs felt like.

Knew how horrible it was to be chained down as he was raped--

The other Jaskier placed himself in front of Jaskier, blocking his vision.

"Hey, I'm right here, you're safe now," he promised. "Look at me. Come on. If you were in danger, I'd show signs of being mistreated, right? But I'm not. Strong, healthy Omega right here. So you will be too."

Jaskier tried to focus, taking in the details.

This other Jaskier was in a vibrant red coat, and a decorated, but sturdy doublet. His chemise was patterned, and he looked...

Well, he looked--

"Where's your bond mark?" Jaskier asked, staring at the unblemished skin on the other Jaskier's neck.

"Very long story," other Jaskier explained, "involving attempted slavery and people who are now *very* dead, and cannot hurt anyone. But they dissolved all traces of Rience's old bond to me, along with that of our soulmate, so no. I don't have any bond scars. But I can show you the other scars, if you'd like-- hey, Vesemir, we raided those camps, I don't suppose we found and kept any of those potions, did we? The ones that dissolved bonds?"

Vesemir frowned. "I can check. If we didn't, I'm sure Yennefer could make one."

Potions--

No.

*No.*

He couldn't take a potion.

Other Jaskier noticed Jaskier's panic, and quickly shook his head. " *Only* if you want it," he promised, "and only to deal with the pain. Even unwilling, mating bonds are agony when one of the pair dies. But if you'd rather live through that pain than drink a potion, *believe me*, I understand-" The other Jaskier stopped talking, staring at Jaskier's chest. "*Fuck* , " he muttered, his eyes fixed on his shoulder.

Where the shirt was torn, from Rience's violence, and his soul words were visible.

The other Jaskier took a breath, tearing his gaze away, and meeting Jaskier in the eye. "You're alright, I promise," the other him whispered. "I... I don't entirely know what's happening, but I'll explain *everything* I do know."

"Jaskier?" Vesemir and the other Jaskier turned his head towards him. "What- *oh*, oh fuck."

"What- what is it?" Jaskier asked, terrified of what the answer might be.

The other Jaskier turned back to him, swallowing, hard. "...I... I'm so sorry. Your soul words. They're gone."



## Chapter 2

### Chapter Summary

Jaskier starts to realize that time travel has consequences.

### Chapter Notes

In honor of me finally having WIFI at the new apartment, have the next chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After getting past Jaskier down to the hot springs so he could take a bath, Jaskier brought him up to his old room to recover, got him some bandages for his injuries, and then stepped out.

Vesemir was waiting down in the main hall, and Jaskier sat down on one of the stools with a heavy sigh.

“So,” Vesemir began. “I know you weren’t sharing the details, but I *don’t* believe that was the plan.”

Jaskier shook his head firmly. “No, no *definitely* not. I- well, you know, I was going back to talk to Vissena.”

“Did you find her?”

Jaskier scowled, glancing down at his hand. “...I may have punched her.”

Vesemir *snorted*, but there was a smile there that he quickly schooled. “So that wasn’t productive?”

“No. No, not at all.” He swallowed, remembering the *disaster* of a trip. “...This wasn’t the only change.”

Vesemir frowned, but waited for Jaskier to continue.

But how to explain?

“Nox...” Jaskier sighed, wishing once again Geralt were here with him, instead of on his trip with Eskel, but Geralt had *needed* a break. “Nox warned us, warned *me*, that letting my mind drift would cause problems. That if I didn’t control my thoughts while trying to create the portal, I could end up dangerous places. But... Seeing Vissena, *talking* to her, trying to reason

with- with that *bitch*, I..." he sighed. "I got distracted. Thinking about all the pain Geralt would have to live through, because of her, and... I ended up in Blaviken."

Vesemir swallowed, all previous mirth gone. "What did you change?" he asked.

Jaskier shook his head. "I'm not sure. Last time... Last time things were *different*. I came back, and what I'd done had an *impact*, but... *this?* "

Jaskier shook his head again, trying to wrap his head around it all. "There's another *me*, up in our room. I *changed* my own *fate*- his *soul words* are gone, and I don't- *fuck!* What if he's not Geralt's soulmate anymore?! How long do I have until this catches up with me?! Right, right, not the question you asked, I'm sorry."

He swallowed, thinking back to the *disaster* the last hour had been. "After... after finding Vissena, and subsequently punching her, I ended up in Blaviken. I... *saw*, the blood bath it had become. And I saw Geralt." He swallowed. "I saw Geralt, and he saw me. Just for a moment. Drenched in blood, right before Stregobor showed up. I... I *saw* Renfri. Watched her die in his arms. And it... I left, when Stregobor was distracting Geralt, but I was too distracted- I- I couldn't stop thinking about Renfri, dying, trying to protect her unborn child, and I..."

"You ended up in your own past, right after Rience had killed one of your children."

Jaskier nodded, finally letting the tears fall.

*Fuck.*

He'd spent so long, trying to overcome his own pain, to work through the horrors and trauma his past had brought, and now...

Now someone else held that pain.

Because he *wasn't* that Jaskier anymore.

Physically, he was a different person.

And *that* Jaskier was upstairs, in his old heat room-

"Fuck- *Armel*, what if- will she even be *born?* "

"I think," Vesemir interrupted, "we should ask Nox. This is a Haltija's powers, and I doubt this is the first time someone's messed with time travel."

Jaskier sighed, but nodded. "He's still out in the orchard with the twins, right? I should head up there. Make sure they're safe..." he stopped, as the full reality of the situation crashed down on him. "Rience is here. Rience is *here, alive*, in the same keep as my *children*. "

"We won't let him hurt them," Vesemir swore. "He's in demeritium cuffs, and as soon as past Jaskier can stand the pain, we'll execute Rience. He's proven himself to be too dangerous to let live."

Jaskier nodded. “How long until Aubrey and Remus get back? I’d feel more comfortable with more Witchers in the keep.”

“They should be up by tomorrow,” Vesemir informed him. “Go on, go find Nox. I’ll stay in the keep in case something else goes wrong.”

Jaskier nodded, making his way out to the orchard.

It had been almost a month since he’d given birth.

He’d gotten most of his body back to where it had been, but physically he’d lost a significant amount of muscle tone.

It showed, as he climbed the steps to the orchard.

“Jaskier!” Nox called, smiling a bit, one twin in each arm. “How was your trip?”

Jaskier tried to smile, but it came out as more of a grimace, and he took Sol from Nox’s arms. “...I fucked up,” he finally whispered, and Nox’s face fell.

“...You ignored my advice.”

It wasn’t a question.

Nox had been helping him learn his powers for years now, and knew of Jaskier’s more impulsive tendencies.

“I... ended up in my own past.”

“Jaskier, *no*, no matter *how* careful you were, there could have been any *number* of unknown side effects! What if your past self saw you?!”

Oh, this was not going to be easy. “He... did. He’s here.”

Nox grew *pale* at this. “No. *No*. ”

“And my past abuser is currently in demeritum cuffs in our dungeon.”

“*Jaskier*, ” Nox hissed, pissed off, and the twins started waking up, picking up on the turbulent emotions.

“*I know*, ” Jaskier tried, “but what was I supposed to *do*? I ended up *in that room* again- you *saw* that room, you *know* what I lived through- I couldn’t just- *leave* him there! Besides, Rience could have followed me through the portal anyway-“

“Human mages cannot open time portals!” Nox countered.

“So, what, I was just supposed to *leave him there*!? ” Jaskier countered, swearing under his breath as Sol and Selene started to cry. “Fuck, fuck,”

“Come,” Nox ordered, walking back into the keep, and Jaskier followed.

They left the twins with Vesemir, who nodded in understanding.

Empaths really shouldn't be near them for this conversation.

"Time travel, as I *told* you before you *began* this, is inherently dangerous. Our ancestors gave very *precise* laws for *very* good reason- time travel runs the risk of breaking our world."

"Right, so, what does that *mean*? "

"What does it *mean*? It means don't fuck with your timeline, Julek! That Jaskier, up there? He *isn't* you. He stopped *being* you- you've broken your past from your present! There's only so much we *know* about this, because we're *not supposed to do this!* "

Nox broke off, pacing the library as he rambled what Jaskier was *pretty* sure were swear words.

He knew most of the older Haltija language, having been raised with it, but no one had ever bothered to teach him swears as a child.

"His soul words have disappeared, haven't they?" Nox finally asked.

"Y-yes! You know what that means?"

Nox scoffed. "'You know what that means?' he asks me," he muttered to himself. "Jaskier, *think*. You just took *yourself*, and your past abuser, and brought them here. Meaning *Geralt won't save him*. You just did. You just took the place of your own soulmate. Which means he won't *meet* Geralt, at least not like that."

Jaskier swallowed.

Right.

This would change Geralt, too.

"So, this other Jaskier... he's going to have to go back to his own time? But on his own?"

"Well I don't think you're about to let your past abuser go free, so *yes*. *Damn* it Jaskier!"

"But I don't see what the problem is? If I'm here, and it *didn't* change *now*, then why does it matter? Or is it going to change after I take him back?"

Nox shook his head. "No, no these timelines have forever been broken. And that's the *problem*. You *broke* a timeline, Jaskier- there's no telling what might be unleashed on this sphere for that!"

"Wait- unleashed on this sphere? What are you talking about?"

Nox took a seat, setting his head in his hands. “There’s... a myth. There’s no evidence to support it, but that’s only because our elders *forbid* anyone from messing with it-“ he sighed, shaking his head. “The belief is, the conjunction of the spheres was caused by a Haltija going back in time, and killing himself.”

## Chapter End Notes

I love you guys so much.

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Summary

Past Jaskier has some needed conversations.

## Chapter Notes

End notes are just life stuff, can be skipped if you want.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He didn't understand *anything*.

And a part of him didn't want to.

His child was *gone*.

Never to be born, never to see life.

Just one day earlier. Just *one day* earlier, and his child would still be alive.

How?

How had he *known*?

There was a knock at the door, and Jaskier looked up to see-

A child.

An Alpha, definitely, but a *child*, with short brown hair and startling blue eyes.

"...dad...?" the child asked, and-

*What?*

"I... um... I don't... think so?" he finally settled on.

Wait-

His future self.

Himself, in the future, had a *child*-

“What’s your name?” he asked.

The child shrugged. “Most people call me Mel, some call me Army. I mean, *technically* my name is Armel, but, you know, I’m really trying out this ‘gender doesn’t suit me’ thing and I’m not really sure how I want to deal with it- Oh! Yeah, my pronouns are ‘they’ or ‘them’, Dad said I needed to introduce myself like that if I want other people to know. What are your pronouns?”

Jaskier blinked, reeling.

This would be his future child, presumably.

And they were asking his pronouns.

They were named after his dearest friend’s sister, and asking his pronouns.

“He him,” he introduced, and Mel nodded.

“Right. So why are you sad?”

Nothing got past this kid apparently.

“I... just lost someone,” he finally settled on.

“Oh. I’m sorry. Do you want to stare outside?”

He blinked. “What?”

“My dad likes to do that. Whenever he gets sad. He stares out the window. Sometimes when I’ve had a nightmare I come up here and find him sitting in that chair, staring out at the moon, like he can’t figure it out. I’ve always said it’s the plant side of us wanting to come out.” They turned their head as someone hollered up the stairs, but Jaskier couldn’t hear what they said. “Ah, Vesemir says to leave you alone, let you grieve and all that. But if you need anything, just go ahead and let one of us know, alright?” Then they were gone, and Jaskier blinked, trying to process *all* the insanity *that* conversation had been.

But mainly-

*Plant side?*

...That’s right, his future self had used magic.

Plant magic.

That must be what they were talking about-

But where the *fuck* did he learn to do that?

He didn't realize he'd fallen asleep until there was another knock on the door, and he startled awake, expecting to see that all of that had been a pain induced dream, and he was once more trapped by Rience.

Instead, the other Jaskier was standing in the doorway, a bowl of food in his hands. "How are you holding up?" he asked, and Jaskier lowered his head, staring down at his hands.

"... I can still feel their blood."

Other Jaskier gently pushed the bowl of food into his hands. "Eat. It won't fix all the problems in the world, but it'll help."

He held the bowl, staring at it, but... he couldn't make himself eat.

Not now.

"...They're your child, right? Mel?"

Other Jaskier nodded.

"...With who?"

Other Jaskier took a breath, sinking into the chair by the window. "...I was pregnant with them. When Geralt saved me. The 8<sup>th</sup> one. The only one to survive him."

Jaskier's fingers stiffened around the bowl. "So... so they're his..."

"Rience *never* had a claim to them," other Jaskier growled, startling Jaskier. "Mel has only *ever* taken after myself or Geralt."

Jaskier nodded hastily, wiping the tears away from his eyes. "I- I'm sorry, I didn't mean--"

"Ah, fuck," other Jaskier leaned back. "I know. Believe me, I *know* how complicated all of this is. I know you didn't mean anything by it."

Jaskier swallowed down his nerves, forcing himself to try and eat something.

It was *good*. Probably the best food he'd had in years, but he still couldn't make himself finish it.

"...Why?" Jaskier finally managed.

"I'm afraid you're going to have to be a bit more specific there," other Jaskier commented.

"Why did he do it?" He couldn't stop the tears, but he didn't *want* to.

Rience wasn't here to hurt him for crying.

"Why did he take me? Why did he kill my children? I don't understand."

The other Jaskier leaned back, staring out the window.



Jaskier hadn't been able to bring himself to look, yet.

His child was supposed to be here with him. *His* child. The one Rience had murdered.

"...It took me a while to understand too," he finally managed. "And it nearly broke me when I figured it out. Are you sure you're ready?"

Jaskier swallowed, but nodded. "Please. Please, I don't- I *can't*- I need to know."

"Do you remember how we used to be able to tell?" Jaskier asked. "When someone meant us harm? We just... had an instinct for it?"

Jaskier nodded, confused. "Yes,"

"That was chaos. Magic. You saw me wield it earlier. And Rience... he's known. This whole time. He mated us, so that *he* could have our chaos."

"But..." no, no that didn't make *sense*. "But Rience has his own Chaos."

"Not like ours." Other Jaskier frowned. "Are you *sure* you want to know?"

"Please," Jaskier whispered. "I need to know why he killed them."

"Because we're not human."

What.

*What?*

"You're... you're joking."

"I promise you, I'm not. Come. Look at the sun with me. It'll help."

He reached out his hand, and Jaskier hesitated for a moment, before accepting it.

He got to his feet, still unsteady, and the other Jaskier stood, wrapping an arm around him, helping him stand in the sun.

Something deep, *deep* inside him, finally relaxed.

He blinked at the light, unused to it, and stared out at the outside world, for the first time in years.

They were in the mountains.

He could make out the edge of a small forest- or was it an orchard?- at the edge of the window, and further on, he could make out what looked like a valley between mountain tops.

"We're connected to the forests, and the trees," other Jaskier explained. "You remember sitting beneath the trees, and it would sound like they were singing to you? It's a part of what we are. I didn't know until Armel came out. They were green."

Jaskier glanced over at him. “But then... *we’d* be green, wouldn’t we?”

Other Jaskier smiled a bit, winked, and then *shifted*, his skin taking on a green hue, with fern leaves spiraling over his arms.

Jaskier squeaked, and other Jaskier chuckled. “It’s alright.” He shifted again, and he looked human once more. “It’s a glamor. You’re wearing one too, though... hm. I’d imagine the orchard must be providing it right now, as your glamor should be tied to your home, but in this world that tree already died. Oh, and that was another thing we learned. Our amnesia? Protecting memories of our past. We were raised with magic, we just... forgot.”

“But- if Rience mated us because we’re not human, wouldn’t he *want* to have children? Wouldn’t he have...” as sickening as the thought was, it had to be said, “wouldn’t he try to *breed* us? To make more of them?”

Other Jaskier sighed. “...I’m sure if it had been Vilgefortz who caught us, that would have been our fate. But Rience wanted us because the mate of an Omegan Haltija- that’s what we are, Haltijas- is immortal. We’re protective spirits. And that protection extends to our mates, too. While he was mated to us, Rience was immortal. Except when we were pregnant. Our children got our protection instead. They should have been safe, too, except... well. *As* our mate, Rience had our magic. And he used our magic to kill our children.”

It was a good thing the other Jaskier was holding him, because Jaskier felt his legs buckle beneath him.

His own magic, was what killed his children.

If he’d known...

Oh, if he’d only *known*!

“...I’ve said too much,” the other Jaskier sighed. “I’m sorry. This is too soon. You’re still healing.”

“Where... where is he?” Jaskier asked. “Your soulmate?”

“He’s out on the path with his brother. He’s a Witcher. And the best man I’ve ever known.”

The best man, eh?

“Want me to tell you something else?” other Jaskier asked, helping Jaskier back to the bed.

“Is it more ways in which the universe fucked us up?”

Other Jaskier shook his head. “No, no this one is hilarious. Priscilla? Is Geralt’s Brother’s soulmate.”

Jaskier chuckled, settling back into bed.

That, at least, was some good news.

“...Will I get to see her again?”

Other Jaskier nodded. “I’m sure she’d love to meet you.”

He left the room, and Jaskier decided that maybe it was time to go to sleep.

He needed the rest, after the insanity this day had been.

## Chapter End Notes

Bit of a tradition to post a chapter on my birthday every year. I'm 25 now. How did this happen??

I'm older than some of the characters I looked up to as a kid.

This feels weird.

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Summary

Geralt and Eskel encounter a monster

## Chapter Notes

Let's check in on the others.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

There were times he hated having an incomplete bond.

Well.

He always hated it.

But there were times he hated it more than others.

“Everything alright, Wolf?” Eskel asked as they traveled.

Geralt frowned, unsure. “Something’s happening. The soulbond feels... different.”

“Do we need to turn back?”

Geralt continued to frown, trying to feel what was happening, before he shook his head. “No, no it’s back to normal. Besides, we’re only two days out. It would be faster to make it to Rhind and ask a local mage for a portal than to turn back now.”

Priscilla had apparently had enough, waiting for them at the front of their group, because she rode back, frowning at them. “Everything alright?”

“Geralt’s worried about the soulbond,” Eskel explained. “Says something feels off.”

“Knowing Jaskier, that could mean anything,” Priscilla commented lightly, but there was still a bit of fear in her eyes.

“Whatever it is, there’s no use waiting around. The faster we get to Rhind, the sooner I’ll know what’s happening.”

They'd set up camp when they heard it.

A cackling sound, and the harsh creaking of branches.

Eskel and Geralt glanced at each other, before both drawing their swords.

"Priscilla, stay by the fire," Eskel warned. "Grab a branch, get it lit. If something comes out of the woods that isn't us, *swing*."

Priscilla nodded, and Eskel and Geralt made their way towards the sound, keeping their eyes peeled on the woods around them.

Something was crying.

An unearthly sound, that grated against Geralt's ears.

He glanced at Eskel, who nodded.

Leshy.

Right.

He cast Igni on his blade, and Eskel did the same, both cautious of where *exactly* this Leshy might be.

Something moved past Geralt, faster than even he could trace, and he swung out, his sword blocking a root that had been going for his chest.

Another cry from the woods, and Eskel ran forward, only to be shoved back by more roots, barely blocked by a quick Igni.

After that, Geralt had to focus on himself.

This thing was *fast*, faster than most Leshens he'd fought in the past, and it kept *moving*.

Usually one or two encounters with fire would have the monster on the retreat, but this thing *kept coming*.

He hissed as something lashed out, slashing into his thigh, but he sliced the root off, blocking another one sneaking up on him.

How was this Leshy still fighting them?

He jumped, dodging another three roots, and thought he caught a glimpse of the thing's horns through the trees.

It was *massive*.

Far bigger than any Leshy he'd ever seen, and it *wasn't stopping*.

He dodged another root, recasting Igni on his blade, and cursed as he heard Eskel cry out.

He was running out of time.

He dodged again, catching another glimpse of the monster and didn't hesitate, casting Igni on the creature.

It wailed- hit, but not down- but then another blast of Igni from the side told him Eskel had caught its position too.

The roots fell to the ground around them, writhing in pain, and Geralt waited until he was sure it was dead before he relaxed, glancing over to Eskel.

One of the roots had pierced his shoulder, and he was clasping it, but he looked up, nodding at Geralt.

"Dead," he concluded, and Geralt nodded back.

"Dead."

They harvested the thing's head, taking it back to camp with them.

That creature *had* to have been disrupting *someone's* town, in order for it to have gotten that big.

Priscilla was already waiting with the first aid kit, helping Eskel bandage the stab wound on his shoulder, and Geralt frowned at it.

"We need to clean it more thoroughly in town tomorrow," he commented. "I don't like the thought of it becoming infected."

Eskel tried to shrug, only to wince. "I'll be alright, Wolf. Nothing a Leshy can do to me that we haven't seen already."

"Do they always look like that?" Priscilla asked, crouching down and poking at the Leshen's head.

"No," Geralt shook his head. "while they are known for shapeshifting, and can take many forms... this one was different. Bigger. Stronger. Like it was hunting something other than humans."

"We should keep an eye out for more monsters," Eskel pointed out. "It's possible it hasn't been praying on the humans around here much, and had found something else to feed off of, and that's why it was so much stronger."

"Right." Priscilla clapped her hands, standing back up. "We'll worry about that tomorrow. For right now, sleep."

"You sleep," Geralt instructed, "both of you. I'll meditate, and keep an ear out. If something goes wrong I want to know immediately."

They both nodded, and settled in for the night.

Geralt searched through his soulbond, frowning.

It was a *mess* right now, scattered emotions of rage and pain and hurt, and Geralt didn't know what he could do.

He needed to be *with Jaskier*, not out here, on some random road in Redania.

He settled into meditation, the echoing feelings of the soulbond his anchor.

Eskel woke up ill.

He groaned, and Geralt looked over, frowning. "...It was too close to your heart," he muttered, crossing over and helping Eskel sit up. "We need to get you to town. Hold on."

He grabbed his bags, sorting through till he found the right potions, handing them over.

Eskel swallowed them down, wincing a bit as he gagged at the flavor.

"Wha's wrong?" Priscilla mumbled, sitting up, still tired.

"The wound's infected," Geralt informed her. "We need to get to Rhind, the apothecary will have what we need for his potions."

Priscilla nodded, immediately setting to work on breaking down camp.

Geralt helped Eskel stand, even as he protested. "It's not *that* bad," Eskel tried, even as the simple act of standing caused him to start sweating. "I'll- be fine," he managed, clinging to Scorpion's saddle with one hand.

"Can you get on the horse?" Geralt asked, and Eskel frowned a bit, before shifting his grip, and pulling himself up with one hand.

It took some effort, but then Eskel was settled, and he nodded. "I'll be fine. Really."

"Alright." Geralt broke off some of the jerky he'd made earlier in the week, passing it up. "Eat."

Eskel grimaced, but took the offered meat, trying to eat it while staying balanced.

A usually simple task.

He barely managed, and Geralt shook his head. "Hold onto the pommel, and let Scorpion lead. If you're about to pass out, *tell us*."

Eskel sighed, but nodded, and then Geralt returned to help Priscilla pack up the rest of camp, before they headed out.

Eskel was at least able to sit still, but Geralt could *smell* the pain spiking from him the more Scorpion walked, and he frowned.

“Priscilla,” he finally spoke, “ride ahead to Rhind, see if you can get word to Yennefer?”

Priscilla nodded, urging her horse onward, and Geralt tugged Roach closer to Scorpion.

“Don’t know what was on that thing’s roots,” Geralt commented, and Eskel grimaced.

“Thought we were immune to most infections,” he admitted.

“Most,” Geralt agreed. “Not all. And this thing’s spreading fast.”

“Sorry Wolf,” Eskel managed, and Geralt could hear the pain in his voice. “Didn’t mean to worry you all.”

“We worry because we care,” Geralt grumbled, focusing on the road, and making sure Eskel didn’t fall. “Now focus on keeping your balance. We’ll be at Rhind soon. Right? You’ll get to see your great grand daughter.”

“...Think you’ll ever have grandkids?” Eskel asked.

Geralt *groaned*. “Sol and Selene are *far* too young to start thinking about that.”

“What about Mel? They might want to have kids some day. Or Ciri.”

“Focus on your own family,” Geralt pointed out. “Ciri’ll have kids if she decides to. Which, right now, doesn’t seem likely.”

“And if she does, you know she’ll send the whole of her council into conniption fits about how she does it.”

Geralt chuckled a bit, still trying to support Eskel.

That she would.

And he’d be lucky enough to watch her do it.

## Chapter End Notes

Oh dear, that's not gonna end well, is it?



# Chapter 5

## Chapter Summary

Jaskier has a long night

## Chapter Notes

I have been WAITING for us to get to this chapter :)  
Unfortunately it is a shorter one.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

*Something was wrong.*

*Something was very wrong.*

*Rience was dead in front of him, his decapitated head severed neatly from his body, but Jaskier was still in pain.*

*The room around him was on fire, blood drenching Jaskier's pants as he fell to his knees, screaming into the darkness.*

*Nothing came out.*

*His mouth was open, but he couldn't hear the scream, trapped endlessly inside his head.*

*Rience's eyes opened.*

*His body stood up without his head, one hand gripping the hair of his decapitated head, the other hand reaching out for Jaskier's throat and wrapping around it, pulling at Jaskier's voice until the scream was coming from Rience's mouth instead of his own, a parody of his own pain-*

He gasped awake, shaking as he lay in Geralt's bed.

*Fuck.*

What the fuck had that been?

Yes, he'd been having nightmares, but... *this?*

That was horrible, and far too realistic.

He shuddered, getting out of bed entirely.

Sleep could fucking *wait*.

Jaskier frowned as he came down the stairs to find Vesemir already sitting in the main hall.

“You’re not asleep?” he questioned.

“I imagine I’m awake for the same reason you are,” Vesemir pointed out.

Jaskier sat down across from him, fingers coming up to trace the skin where his cursed bond used to lie. “...I don’t think I’ll be able to sleep while he’s still here.”

“While he’s still alive, you mean.”

Jaskier nodded. “After everything he’s done... there’s very few people who could kill him.”

“Unless,” Vesemir paused, then rolled his eyes when Jaskier didn’t piece it together. “Unless past you takes the potion that dissolves the bond. The potion kills the partner of any bond that’s incomplete, yes?”

Jaskier perked up a bit. “I’d forgotten that bit, yes, they did say that. You reached out to Yennefer?”

“She kept a vial of the potion to experiment on, and analyze. She should be heading back to the keep in the next few days.”

“Perfect, maybe she can pick up that book she keeps promising to look at.”

Vesemir nodded. “Would you let me take a look at it? I know you want to be careful with that information, but I might be able to identify other works by the same Witcher who wrote the final pages.”

Jaskier nodded hastily. “Of course! Vesemir, you have my *complete* trust, I *know* you, I know you’d never use the information in that book to hurt me.”

“You might. Do you think this past you does?” Jaskier sighed, frowning, but Vesemir continued. “It’s not just your secrets anymore. It’s Nox’s, and it’s the secrets of your past self, and all other Haltijas. Do you think they’d want me to know this?”

Jaskier scowled, but he understood Vesemir’s point. “This isn’t just about the book, is it.” It wasn’t really a question.

“It’s about whatever you think it needs to be about.”

Jaskier nodded, getting up and stretching. “Right. That’s enough cryptic for one evening. I’m going to go check on the twins, see how they’re doing.”

The twins were hungry, and Jaskier spent a long time getting the both of them fed before they finally quieted down and went back to sleep.

He sighed, staring down at them.

They were beautiful, his children.

On an impulse, he picked both of them up, cradling them close to his chest, even as they slept.

They were here, they were *alive*.

Gods, it barely felt real some days.

There’d rarely been any fear with these two.

Little worry about their odds of survival.

He’d been pregnant nine times now, in his life.

And because of *Rience*, he’d had to fear for their very survival.

Because of that *bastard*, he’d lost seven of his children.

He set the twins back down, brushing their tiny tufts of hair away from their faces.

He’d thought these feelings were over.

Thought he’d moved *past* this anger and pain, but... now?

Now Rience was in the *fucking* building.

In the same building as his children.

As *Armel*.

Fuck.

He shouldn’t be down here.

He should just wait for Yennefer to portal in with the potion, and let it run its course.

The potion would kill the mate if the bond didn’t go both ways, he remembered hearing that. The only reason Geralt had survived it when the slavers had forced the potion on Jaskier was

that Jaskier had mated Geralt *back*.

He just had to *wait*.

But he couldn't get the thoughts out of his head.

Couldn't stop the anger at everything Rience had done to him.

Couldn't stop the fucking *nightmares*.

He stopped at the door to Rience's cell, taking a deep breath, before he slid the latch open to look inside.

The cell was nicer than the room Rience had kept him in, at least.

There was a window, no matter how small.

The bed had several blankets on it, and while there was no fireplace, it was summer, and fires weren't needed.

"You're the other one," Rience muttered, not looking up.

"I'm the one that outlived you."

Rience snorted, the sound sending chills down Jaskier's spine. "And yet, I'm still alive."

"Not for long."

"Is that why you're here? To gloat? To tell me that I'll soon be dead? That's not the Jaskier I know."

"You don't know me!" Jaskier yelled, slamming a fist on the door. "You abducted me. *Raped* me. Fucking *murdered my children*, none of that makes you know me!"

"Seven years, slut," Rience grinned. "I've known you for seven long years."

Jaskier swallowed back the fear.

Rience *couldn't* hurt him again. "No. You *tortured* me for those years. You *never* knew me."

"And yet, I knew what you were, long before you did."

"That's because you were told. And eventually my soulmate told me. My soulmate. That *saved* me from you."

"You reek of him," Rience growled, and Jaskier blinked, startled.

"Of who? My soulmate?"

"No. Of mine."

Jaskier swallowed.

Ten years, he'd spent at Rience's hands.

The bastard had *never* brought up his own soulmate.

The few times in the beginning Jaskier had tried to bring it up, to get a reaction, Rience had burned him within an inch of his life.

"How could I smell like your soulmate?" Jaskier asked, trying to hide his nerves. "I never met them."

"Didn't you?" Rience asked, glaring at him through the bars of the cell.

He stepped forward, till he was able to press his face against the bars. "You *reek* of him. Him and his manipulation... he's got his claws sunk deep in you somehow..."

Jaskier scowled, turning on his heel and walking away. "You're just trying to fuck with my head," he shot back. "Trying to torture me again. It'll never happen."

"I don't need to get in your head," Rience called after him, cackling. "He's already in there!"

Crazy bastard.

Jaskier shivered, trying to pretend Rience's words *hadn't* terrified him further.

## Chapter End Notes

I'll just leave that bit of crypticness there

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Summary

Eskel's not doing well

## Chapter Notes

Eskel whump ahead

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They didn't make it to an inn.

Eskel fell off of Scorpion still several miles from town, before they'd even left the *forest*.

Geralt dismounted, crossing over to Eskel's side and hauling him up, pulling him to one of the trees to set him against.

"I-I'm sorry," Eskel managed, and Geralt frowned at the delirium slipping into Eskel's eyes.

"Focus on my heartbeat," Geralt instructed, wiping some of the sweat from Eskel's brow and frowning at the fever he felt raging beneath his fingers.

Witchers shouldn't *get* fevers.

He carefully unwrapped the bandages from Eskel's shoulder, stopping when he saw what was underneath.

"...how bad is it?" Eskel asked, his voice cracking.

"We need Jaskier. *Now*."

Whatever the *fuck* that thing had been, it couldn't have been a Leshen.

Because no Leshen left a *parasite* behind, but there was some form of *tree*, trying to grow its way out of Eskel's arm.

"Wolf?" Eskel asked, hand coming up to grasp Geralt's.

"You're going to be fine." They could both hear the lie.

Eskel's eyes met Geralt's, and he-

Fuck.

He looked *scared*.

"Geralt," he whispered. "Tell me."

"Something from the monster last night. It's infected you, and it... it's growing. We need a mage. It... it seems plant based, so... hopefully we can reach Jaskier, and he can maybe portal down and help."

Eskel took a breath, letting it out slowly. "We can try to cauterize the wound, see if that helps."

"That..." he couldn't say it.

Eskel already knew. "If we're seeing it, that means it's already working its way inwards too," he summarized. "It's likely heading to either my heart or head, depending on its intent. But- Geralt, it might not stop it, but cauterizing it *will* slow it down, alright? It's plant based, so fire *will* hurt it."

"...I don't want to hurt *you*," Geralt whispered, and Eskel gave him a wry smile.

"I trust you. Now- hurry, before it gets any further."

Geralt nodded, digging out one of his daggers and casting Igni.

"Hold still," he instructed, bracing an arm against Eskel's chest to keep him still.

He dug the blade into the wound, and *felt* Eskel stiffen under him, could hear the sharp breath Eskel pulled in, trying to stay strong against the pain.

Whatever the tree-parasite *was*, it thrashed in the wound, trying to wrap itself around Geralt's hand. Geralt shifted the angle of the dagger, and Eskel cried out, but the thing *creaked*, before withering and finally falling limply still.

Carefully, Geralt grabbed what was left of it, trying to pull it out of Eskel's shoulder.

Eskel *screamed*, and Geralt nearly dropped the root, only barely managing to grab ahold of it again before it tried to wriggle its way *further inside*. "Fuck, I don't think I can get it all," Geralt growled, trying to pull out what he could without injuring Eskel further.

"Just- just get what you can," Eskel panted, his fingers digging into the ground. "Whatever- *ah!* Whatever's left," he panted, "I'll make do, till we can find a mage."

Geralt nodded, putting more of his strength into pulling the thing out, until finally it dislodged, and he cast Igni on what was left in his hands.

He glanced over at Eskel, who had toppled over, and was sucking in ragged gasps for breath.

“Was that all of it?” he asked, and Eskel grimaced.

“I don’t know. It... it feels like part of it broke off. But I feel better.”

“Come on. There’s a river nearby, let’s see if we can at least get you washed up while we wait for Priscilla.”

He could *feel it*.

The sensation of Geralt *tugging it out* had at least shown him what to look for, what part of *him* wasn’t *him* anymore.

Part of it still lingered inside him.

Hopefully...

Hopefully the cauterization would be enough to last them till they could find a mage.

They’d made it to the river without any difficulty, and Geralt set Eskel down to recover as he refilled their waterskins.

He could think clearly again though.

Enough to know that something *else* was thinking for him.

*Come to the woods*, it muttered.

He shook his head.

That wasn’t him.

Those *weren’t his thoughts*.

*Come back to the woods, let the spirits call to you.*

No. *No*.

“Eskel?”

Eskel swallowed, doing his best to smile. “I’ll be fine.” *I should tell Geralt. He needs to know. This can’t be good.*

*But he’d be worried, and there’s nothing he could do.*

*But he could help-*

*Help what? It’s going to happen eventually. Might as well let it-*

He shook his head, clearing away the thoughts.



He *needed to tell Geralt*.

Geralt, who was frowning back into the woods.

Should he be able to hear something?

But all he could hear was the uneven pounding of his own heartbeat, far too fast.

Something was very wrong here. And he didn't know what to do about it.

"Stay here," Geralt instructed, and Eskel nodded.

He knew better than to go somewhere else when his own head was so unpredictable.

*Come, let the trees into your heart,*

Oh fuck no, that was creepy enough to snap him out of it.

Alright, the voice wanted him near trees? Then he'd move away from them.

He stood up, still unsteady on his feet, and made his way closer to the river.

Scorpion snorted at him, but he focused on the water.

Stepping into it, he felt a shock of clarity.

And a thrum of magic.

Something was here.

Something *powerful*.

Powerful enough to counter the voice in his head?

He took a few measured breaths, wincing at the pain in his shoulder.

Even with his advanced healing, the thing had gotten *far*, and he wasn't sure how much mobility he'd regain.

He could *hear* the voice still trying to get to him, but it was quieter now.

Easier to ignore.

Something...

Something in here was fighting it.

But what?

"Eskel?" Geralt was back, along with Priscilla, who was staring at him with worry. "...What are you doing in the river?"

Eskel shook his head, trying to clear everything. “There’s... there’s magic... the... voices-“

Fuck, why couldn’t he get the words *out*?

He could hear Geralt and Priscilla talking now. “I was able to send a message to Yennefer, she should be able to meet us in Rhind, she’s going to portal.”

Yennefer. Good.

*Bad. No, she’s not allowed to look at us-*

Us?

“Geralt,” Eskel called out, forcing the words out of his mouth. “Something- something else is here.”

“Why don’t you come out of the water?” Geralt called, and Eskel shook his head.

“No, no the water’s helping keep it at bay,” he managed, *forcing* his mouth to work with him. “Out there it’s stronger. It- Geralt it’s in my *head*.”

*“Fuck.”*

Geralt nodded, turning to Priscilla. “I need you to meet Yennefer, and bring her here, alright? If it’s Eskel talking, then he’s barely keeping it out. And if it’s not... I might need help fighting him off.”

Priscilla nodded hastily, running off, and Geralt stood on the bank of the river. “Focus on me, Eskel, not whatever’s trying to take over. You’re in control. You control your own actions, remember?”

Eskel shakily nodded, sinking to his knees in the river to give himself more support.

The thrum of magic got louder.

“Can you still hear me?”

Eskel sank his fingers into the riverbank, anchoring himself. “Yes, yes I can hear you.”

“Good. Priscilla’s out of earshot. You’re yourself right now?” Eskel nodded, even as his fingers brushed up against something. “If you lose yourself again, if this monster wins, what do you want me to tell her?”

“Tell her I love her. Same as you’d have me tell Jaskier,” Eskel instructed, fingers digging around the object for lack of something better to do.

He frowned as it came loose, and he brought it up to the light.

It was a jar.

A jar, with a strange symbol on it.

A thousand voices warred in his head, screaming at him to leave it alone, screaming at him to *open it*.

He couldn't tell which was the parasite, and which was him.

He opened the jar, and everything went quiet.

Chapter End Notes

Oooop! Cliffhanger!

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Summary

Past Jaskier is starting to realize some things.

## Chapter Notes

We'll get back to Eskel next chapter, don't worry :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Why was it *harder* to fall asleep? He was safer here.

Rience was *locked up*, why was it so much harder to sleep now than it had been when he'd been imprisoned by the bastard?

Jaskier sighed, sitting up, his hand still moving to his stomach, as if he could feel his child in there still.

They were gone.

They were *dead*.

Jaskier pushed himself back to the window, staring out at the moon, trying to feel *something*.

Other Jaskier and Mel both said that looking outside would help, but...

But.

He wasn't them.

His child was *gone*.

His baby, killed.

He shook as he started crying again, the frozen shell he'd managed to hold up against Rience finally cracking.

They were *gone*.

They were *dead*.

All that pain, and he hadn't been able to protect *anyone*.

The door creaked open and he flinched back, toppling off the chair, landing painfully.

Mel was standing there, tears on their face. "I'm sorry, I... I felt you crying."

*Felt?*

Wait- other Jaskier had talked about this.

Empathy. Magic.

"...I'm sorry," Jaskier whispered, tears still sliding down his face.

Mel crouched down next to him, offering their hand.

Hesitantly, he took it.

"I... know a bit. About what you lived through. Or, I guess, what my dad lived through. He didn't tell me much, but... I figured the rest out. What that man did to you."

It hit him, suddenly, that Mel *knew*. Mel *knew* their father was Rience.

Mel *knew* what Jaskier had suffered at his hands.

"I hope you're not scared of me too," they whispered.

"Oh, oh, Mel, no I'm not scared of you."

"I'm glad."

Jaskier looked at them, and... and he *saw* it.

Saw the sharp edge of them that had to have come from Rience, and no one else.

And he saw the *compassion* they had to have gotten from Jaskier.

"...I... I just lost one of your siblings," he whispered, and Mel nodded.

"Papa explained." They shifted a bit, sitting down, still holding onto Jaskier's hand. "... Where's your Dad? Wait, no, sorry-" They paused, sorting through words in their head.

Where had they gotten that behavior from?

"Where's your Geralt? I forgot you only call him that around me."

"...Who's Geralt?" Jaskier asked. He'd heard the name before, but didn't have anyone to place with it.

"... *oh*, " Mel whispered, staring up at him. "Oh I see... They always told me Geralt saved you, they never mentioned you didn't know him before..."

Jaskier felt a bit of a flush, and he couldn't figure out why. "Saved me?"

"Well, I guess Papa saved you this time- oh, oh now I get why this is complicated... Um. Geralt's my other Dad. I have a Papa and a Dad. Oh! It's because their soulmates! That feels important to know."

That clicked together two pieces other Jaskier had said.

He's sure he would have figured it out sooner, but... it had been an exhausting day.

Mel squeezed his hand tighter, leaning against his shoulder. "It's going to be alright. You've got all of us now."

That wasn't how the world worked, but hearing a child say it would be alright... it made a part of Jaskier believe it.

"Come on," Mel announced, tugging him to standing. "Let's go visit the twins. That always cheers Papa up."

Twins?

Other Jaskier had twins.

Infants, who couldn't be more than two months old.

But they were here.

They were *alive*.

Jaskier's stomach *ached* with the pain of his own loss as he stared down at the twins, wrapped around each other in their cot, in what appeared to be some form of nursery.

He'd never have been able to give his children this.

Rience would never had let him get to full term, let alone provided him with what he needed to *care* for his children.

As much as he hated to think it... it was better that the others hadn't survived.

But why?

*Why* couldn't he have been saved *before* he lost the last one?

"I'm sorry," Mel whispered, "I thought this would make you happier, I didn't mean to make you cry more."

"You didn't," Jaskier whispered, sinking to his knees beside the cot, trying to keep the tears back. "It- it's not you."

Mel placed their hand on his shoulder, and he reached up, clasping the hand.

Being offered comfort by a child.

*His own* child, who *wasn't his*.

What was his life coming to?

Had he ever truly escaped? Or had Rience beaten him so badly he was hallucinating this entire bizarre adventure?

It would certainly make more sense than accepting everything here as *true*.

“Oh, I’m sorry, I must have been distracted,” other Jaskier spoke, startling Jaskier and Mel glanced over at him, before glancing back down at Jaskier.

“...He needs you, I think. You both do.”

“And *you* need to be in bed, Mel. It’s past midnight. Go get some sleep.”

Mel sighed, before nodding, and giving Jaskier one last hug in passing. “You’re going to be alright. Everyone cries about sad things, but that doesn’t mean the sad lasts longer.”

Then they left, giving other Jaskier a hug in passing.

Other Jaskier sighed, coming to sit next to Jaskier. “...I still can’t believe they’re here, some days.”

“You’ve started a family.”

Other Jaskier shrugged. “More that I got handed one. Geralt was already raising Ciri when he saved me, so I got to help raise her, then Mel, and now Sol and Selene.”

“Sun and Moon?”

Other Jaskier snorted. “Oy, you try going through birth and discovering you’ve had *twins*, and coming up with good names.”

“...You mean you don’t remember them?”

Other Jaskier sighed, leaning his head back against the wall. “I’ve tried my best to forget, honestly.”

Jaskier swallowed. “Orion. Chrysanthemum. Richard. Penelope. And I’m *sure* we’d chosen names for the others as well.”

Other Jaskier glanced over at him. “...if you want to remember those names, I encourage you to do so. You’re *not* me. Not anymore. You have your own life to go live, without having to make the choices I made.”

“...But why *did* you make those choices?” Fuck it, he was crying. There was no one here but himself to see it, after all. “Why did you forget the names we’d chosen? Why did you abandon your past children? Did they stop mattering once they were dead? Did *I* stop mattering when-“ he stopped, because that wasn’t what he’d meant to ask.

Or, rather, his other self wasn’t who he wanted to ask it of.

Other Jaskier just stared at him, tears in his eyes. “...They never stopped mattering. And I will *never* forget them. But their names aren’t tied to them. They never bore those names. I only bore them in blood, after they’d already stopped breathing. I had to decide for myself, *after* I got out, that I wouldn’t carry the names of the dead with me any longer. And if that’s not a choice you want to make, again: you don’t have to make it. But please... don’t judge me for the choices I made to let *go* of that past.”

Jaskier stared at him. “...You’re pretending I didn’t happen... you... why *were* you there? Why did you show up, and save me from Rience?”

Other Jaskier swallowed. “...an accident. I ended up displaced from my time, using powers... powers I don’t know how to control yet.”

“...You saved me on an accident.” Jaskier looked away, tears falling from his face. “I need... to not be here. Excuse me.”

Other Jaskier let him go, and Jaskier stopped trying to pretend he was alright.

He wasn’t.

And he wouldn’t be.

Because if his future could save him- *years* before he was ‘supposed’ to be saved...

Then why couldn’t he have stopped it from happening to begin with?

## Chapter End Notes

Poor Jaskier...



# Chapter 8

## Chapter Summary

Eskel fights possession.

## Chapter Notes

I wanted to have the whole fic written by the time we got here, but oh well. I don't think I'll have to edit anything after the fact. I'm fairly confident in what I've got :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Something had changed.

The air around him was dark and heavy, and all voices had quieted except one.

*Why are you fighting me so hard?*

He tried to muster up the strength to stand, but he wasn't sure who was in control anymore.

On the banks, Geralt was calling to him, but Eskel couldn't force his mind to focus.

*I could give you anything you wanted, the voice promised him. You just have to let me in. Stop fighting me. You could have power beyond your wildest dreams. Just head back to the forest.*

Eskel shook his head.

It wouldn't work. "...I just want to see the end of this," he whispered, and suddenly, he could.

*He saw himself, bloodied, collapsed next to the river, the parasite withering and dying next to him as Geralt dropped his sword, trying to haul Eskel up.*

*Saw two warriors with stark white hair and cornflower blue eyes, a man and a woman, slay a monster larger than any Royal Griffin he'd ever seen.*

*He saw Jaskier, unconscious in the main hall, covered in blood as Geralt knelt next to him, begging him to wake up, to come back, tears streaming down his face.*

*Saw himself, far older than any Witcher should be, lying in bed as a young woman tended to him. "It's alright now, you can let go if it's time," she whispered to him. "I'm sure the others are eager to see you again."*

*He saw Geralt, and a young Ciri sitting next to him, staring wide eyed at Jaskier.*

*"It's you. You were there. How?"*

*Jaskier sat down across from Geralt, nervously. "I've been told I'll need to explain some things to you."*

*He saw a vast gathering of people; men, elves, dwarves, and more, all gathered together around a paper, taking turns signing it.*

*Saw a graveyard of bones, all grown over by strange trees he'd never seen before, where absolute silence reigned, and nothing could be heard for miles.*

*Saw the skies spilt open as spheres collided once again-*

*That- that had been magic.*

*The jar.*

*The seal-*

*It was a djinn-*

*The parasite reacted faster.*

*"I wish to be in control," someone that wasn't him, said, and suddenly he couldn't move.*

*He couldn't move.*

*But his body moved.*

*He felt his own knees rise from the water without his command, and on the banks, Geralt stiffened.*

*Run. Please, Geralt, please run. Save yourself.*

*"Eskel?"*

*He felt the parasite dig into his memories.*

*Felt as it broke down his attempts at keeping it out.*

*"I think it's going away," he felt his own mouth say,*

*No, no it's not- Geralt run! Find Priscilla and get away from me!*

Geralt, thank every god by *name*, didn't look convinced, drawing his sword. "Eskel," he cautioned, "stay where you are. Please."

He couldn't hear the parasite anymore.

It didn't *need* to talk to him anymore.

*It* was in control, not him.

It tilted its head, *his* head that he had no control over, and stretched out its arm-

Eskel's injured arm-

Eskel saw it, finally, and realized just how far gone he was.

The arm was *wrapped* in vines and bark, the cauterization having done not nearly enough to stop the parasite.

Geralt barely reacted in time as vines came from the forest, a deluge of plants far stronger than anything Jaskier had ever conjured.

It was like fighting the Leshen all over again, only this time-

*This time Geralt's alone, and I'm the monster.*

His feet began to move, stepping out of the water, drawing him closer to Geralt.

Geralt's sword swung in the air, and Eskel tried *desperately* to stop.

*Please*, he begged, knowing the words wouldn't pass his lips. *Please, Geralt, if it comes down to it, just kill me. Save yourself and kill me.*

Geralt didn't hear him.

He didn't get that chance, either.

The parasite was faster than Geralt, and even as Geralt fended off vine after vine, Eskel's body slowly moved closer and closer to him.

Eskel tried to force his body to stop, tried to cry out, but he was *trapped*. Stuck inside his own body, forced to watch as the parasite moved closer and closer to Geralt.

One of the vines wrapped around Geralt's leg, and he barely cut it off before it could topple him, but another wrapped around his arm, then two more wrapped around his chest.

He still had his sword arm free, and he managed to slice two more vines before he was covered, pinned in place by the vines.

One of them wrapped itself around Geralt's throat, and Eskel *felt* the tear running down his face as he watched Geralt strain against the vines, trying to breathe.

No.

No, not like this.

*It can't end like this!*

"You tried so desperately to save him," he heard his own voice speak. "It would have served you better to kill him before I took over."

"Eskel," Geralt grit out, even as the vines tightened, and Eskel heard something creaking. "This isn't you, you can fight... this..." the vine tightened further, cutting off all air, and Eskel could *feel* the tears.

He *couldn't*.

He *couldn't fight it*, the thing had fucking *wished* for control from a *djinn*.

...A djinn...

But djinns gave three wishes.

He'd used one on accident, seeing glimpses of all endings.

The parasite had used the second one, seizing control from him.

But there was one wish left.

*I wish the parasite gone!*

...it didn't work.

Of course it didn't.

Because he had to *speak* the words for them to count.

He felt his body start to draw his own sword, and he *pushed* against it, as hard as he could.

His hand stopped.

*What?*

How-

But the parasite had control-

*Had* control

It wished for control.

*It didn't wish for permanent control.*

*He could still do something.*

He shoved against the blade, pushing all of his strength into it, forcing the parasite to fight him.

Forcing its attention to his *arm*.

He had to be fast.

Had to time it *perfectly*.

It still had the majority of the control over his body, but if he could draw its attention away, if he could force it to focus on his *arm*-

He felt his arm start to give way, and *forced* his control over his mouth instead.

The sword left his scabbard and he *shoved* words out of his mouth. “*I wish the parasite gone!*”

Control *flooded* back to him, and he collapsed, the vines around Geralt falling away, leaving both of them gasping for air on the banks of the river.

Eskel couldn't put pressure on his arm, and he fell, catching a glimpse of the vine that had been *inside* of him, writhing on the ground as Geralt dropped his sword, instead trying to help Eskel sit up.

“Eskel? Tell me it's still you in there,” he growled, and Eskel tried to meet Geralt's eyes, even as he coughed up blood.

“You-you're still alive,” he managed, his voice hoarse. “You're still alive... good...” then his eyes rolled back in his head, and he passed out.

## Chapter End Notes

Well, this is going to be fun.

# Chapter 9

## Chapter Summary

Aubrey and Remus get back to the keep.

## Chapter Notes

I'M SORRY I KNOW IT'S LATE!!

My work has been a pain and I genuinely forgot what day of the week it was, I'm so sorry!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“It’s almost dawn.” Vesemir commented, and Jaskier sighed. “And don’t tell me the twins kept you up. They haven’t made a peep.”

“You’d only know that if you were listening too. You haven’t slept.” Jaskier looked up from where he was sitting on the floor. “You heard.”

“...The ability to change time begs the question ‘why don’t we’. But the truth is, you *don’t* have control. You’re not all powerful. We’re still waiting to see what ramifications there will be from this incident, which was an *accident*. I fear he’s put you on a pedestal, and not realized that you’re just as uncertain as him.”

Vesemir crouched down next to him. “You’re not a god. You do not bear the responsibilities of the whole world. And it is possible, that by saving him earlier, you might have caused others to die. There’s no knowing that. History is still playing out as we speak. His very existence proves that what we thought impossible is in fact very probable. We don’t know what will happen next.”

“He didn’t actually say any of that,” Jaskier pointed out.

“No. But he thought it. And, as he is a form of you, you thought it as well.”

Jaskier sighed, stretching. “So... maybe I will save myself one day, before Rience could ever hurt me. Maybe I won’t. Maybe traveling to the past accidentally screwed everything over and everyone’s about to die in the next two minutes.”

“And, maybe everything will work out. We’re still living our lives. There’s no telling what could be around the corner.”

Jaskier took a deep breath, letting it out again. “Thank you, Vesemir. Really. You’ve always been so kind and wise...”

“Wise enough for you to heed a bit more advice?”

Jaskier glanced over, and there was a bit of sadness in Vesemir’s eyes. “What advice?”

“Don’t talk to Rience again. You’re right. He *is* trying to get into your head. I may not have heard what he said to you, but it upset you. Closure doesn’t mean sacrificing your peace of mind.”

Jaskier did his best to smile, but it didn’t meet his eyes, he knew. “...I’ll keep that in mind.”

By the time Remus and Aubrey made it back up the killer, Jaskier was revisiting his ‘no sleep till the bastard’s dead’ stance.

It didn’t help that Nox was glaring at him every time the keep so much as *creaked*.

It was fine.

They didn’t know if there *had* been any ‘earth shattering events’ since his time travel. There hadn’t been last time he’d time traveled.

Even if that *was* by complete accident, and didn’t involve changing the course of his own future.

Aubrey winced as he took in Jaskier’s state. “What happened, the twins give you that much trouble sleeping?”

Vesemir sighed. “A lot happened.”

“Papa made a big mistake!” Mel announced, and Jaskier *winc*ed. This was the *problem* with raising a kid around Witchers.

“Big mistake?” Remus asked, then paused, staring.

Jaskier turned around to see his past self standing in the doorway.

“...That’s... not a doppler,” Aubrey commented, staring. “...what the fuck is happening?”

“I time traveled, trying to figure out my Omegan courting gift for Geralt,” Jaskier explained, “and... well. Ended up saving myself. From Rience. Who’s locked in demeritium cuffs in the dungeon till Yennefer gets here.”

Remus glanced between Jaskier and his past self, and whistled. “Damn, you weren’t exaggerating what that bastard did to you.”

Aubrey punched Remus on the shoulder none too gently, before turning his attention back to past Jaskier. “Hey, sorry about him, Witcher manners and all. Do you wanna come take a seat?”

Past Jaskier swallowed, and Jaskier couldn’t smell emotions like the Witchers could, but he could recognize his own nervousness.

Eventually, after several long moments, Past Jaskier moved to seat at the end of one of the far benches.

Mel scrambled up to get him some food before anyone else could, and Aubrey grabbed himself a bowl before slowly approaching and sitting down across from Past Jaskier.

Past Jaskier ate slowly, holding himself stiffly as though aware of everyone’s eyes on him.

It would probably help if the Witchers kept their eyes *off* of him- for fuck’s sake, *they* had powers that let them watch past Jaskier *without* staring!

“You... all... know me. You know what I’ve lived through.”

Aubrey nodded. “Lived through my fair bit of it too.”

Past Jaskier startled. “What? But- but you’re a *Witcher*.”

“Omega Witcher,” Aubrey pointed out. “Got separated from Remus. Spent thirty years as an Omega slave. Just because I’m strong doesn’t mean I’m invincible. Or untouchable.”

Past Jaskier looked aside, startling as Aubrey placed a hand gently over his. “And being hurt like that, it doesn’t make you weak. I don’t imagine it’s easy, seeing your future self come in and do all these things you never could. But that’s the thing. You *couldn’t* do them. There’s a couple *decades* separating you two. You’ll be just as strong as him one day. And besides. You’re pretty strong in your own right. You just haven’t had a chance to show it yet.”

Oh *Aubrey*.

Past Jaskier blinked at him, thoroughly startled. “How... how did you know I was thinking that?”

“Lived through a bit of it myself, like I said. Plus, I’ve gotten to know our Jaskier pretty well the last few months. You’re more alike than you realize.”

Remus nudged Jaskier’s shoulder as he sat down next to him, distracting him from the conversation. “How’re you holding up?” he whispered. “You said Rience is here, want me to go kill him for you?”

Jaskier shook his head. “Rience is immortal until Yennefer can dissolve Past Me’s bond with him, or Geralt or Nox kill the bastard. Haltija magic’s protecting him, so only Haltija magic can kill him.”

“Right. See, I noticed how you skipped my first question.”



Clever bastard. "...I'm managing. Haven't been able to sleep, but... that's pretty expected at this point."

"This was because of you going to talk to Visenna, right?"

Jaskier sighed dramatically, letting his head fall to the table. "A failure of a conversation if ever there was one. I punched the bitch."

Remus laughed, damn him, long and loud, clapping Jaskier on the back. "She fucking deserved it. Hey, next time you time travel, can you go punch my old man for me?"

"I don't suppose punching his mother counts as my Omega courting gift?"

"I mean, Geralt did kill Rience for you," Nox pointed out, "some people might argue that was his Omega courting gift to you."

Jaskier rolled his eyes, pushing off from the table. "Right. I'm checking on the twins. You all have fun."

Rience scowled as he looked up to see the newer Jaskier, staring at him from the door.

Only... this wasn't the hatred Jaskier stared at him with.

He knew this gaze.

*Hated* it.

"So. You really are in there. How ever did you manage that?"

Not Jaskier straightened, tilting his head and smirking, eying Rience coldly. "I'm not here to chat. Just to remind you that the worst they'll do to you is kill you. You remember what I can do to you, yes?"

"Aren't you worried the others will catch on? Figure you out?"

Not Jaskier shrugged. "As long as I let the bitch out to play, and stay in the background... they're none the wiser."

"Then why are you *here*?"

"Simply ensuring that you remember your place, and remember what I can do to you if you fuck with my plans again, Rin."

"Still pissed I got to him first, are you?" Rience stretched a bit, grinning. "How *did* you get into his head? And does this mean someone finally killed you?" he cackled. "You're a *ghost*. You had to latch your soul onto an *artifact*, and hope it was found by someone you had a tie to."

“At least I *had* a plan for when I inevitably died. But you? You let your vengeance cloud your judgement. You tried to steal from me, tried to make yourself immortal, and it got you killed. All this, because I wouldn’t mate you.”

Rience *scowled*. “You’re here in the hopes I won’t tell. Because I *recognize* you. Too fucking little, too fucking late. You can’t kill me yourself without tipping your hand that you’re inside your little ‘vessel’. So you have to hope you can threaten me enough not to tell them. You forgot,”

He got to his feet, crossing to the door and grinning at the vessel bearing his once-soulmate. “I don’t fear death *nearly* as much as I hate you.”

Not Jaskier scowled, turning around and walking away. “It’s not death you should be afraid of, but what I’ll do to you if you fuck with my plans.”

## Chapter End Notes

I'm expecting that to have raised a LOT of questions.

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Summary

Geralt makes it back to Kaer Morhen

## Chapter Notes

For clarification, it IS still Jaskier in there, until it's not. The possession is not total, yet.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Geralt took great pleasure in blasting the last of the parasite with Igni, but it was already dead.

The words hadn't made sense before, but looking back, it was clear Eskel had stumbled on a djinn.

A djinn he'd used to get rid of the parasite.

Once he was sure of the parasite's death, he was able to start bandaging Eskel's wounds, wincing at the scarring left behind from the wood.

He didn't know how to remove it.

And there was a significant chance Eskel's wounds- at least those in his arm- would never fully recover.

A portal opened next to him, and he looked up to see Yennefer step through, along with Priscilla.

Priscilla dropped to her knees beside Eskel, pulling his head into her lap. "Is he going to be alright?"

Geralt looked to Yennefer, who looked rather ill. "Come. We need to get him to Kaer Morhen. Something's going on in the continent and I have a feeling it may have started there."

"Is Jaskier alright?" Geralt asked, lifting Eskel into his arms.

Yennefer frowned as one portal closed behind her, and she formed another. "Mostly. Let's just say he was the epicenter of all of this."

All of this? All of *what*?

Had a monster gotten to Kaer Morhen?

He stepped through the portal, relieved to see Jaskier standing, alive and well-

No, not well.

The scent of pain and fear were stark in the air, and it had been *years* since Jaskier had been that badly bruised.

Years since he'd seen an inflamed bond mark on his neck, or seen Jaskier flinch away from him like that.

"Jaskier?" he asked, taking a step forward only for Vesemir to step in his way.

"That's not the Jaskier you know," Vesemir cautioned him, and Geralt forced himself to stop.

He was still holding Eskel.

He swallowed, focusing on the situation.

He could hear Selene and Sol's heartbeats where their baskets had been brought to the main hall. He could see Remus and Nox standing nearby. "What happened?" he asked Vesemir instead. "Is... is he alright?"

"This," Yennefer announced, stepping through the portal and closing it behind her, "is Jaskier as you first met him. *Our* Jaskier apparently saved him- where is our Jaskier?"

"Here," Jaskier called-

From the other side of the hall, coming up the stairs, leaning heavily on Aubrey.

He wasn't battered or bruised, thank the *gods*, and no cruel mating bite stood out against his skin, but he-

"What happened to *you*?" Remus asked, coming to support him on his other side.

Aubrey shrugged. "Found him passed out near the hot springs. Your lack of sleep catching up with you, little mage?"

Jaskier ignored him, having seen Eskel. "What happened?!" he cried, trying to push off of Aubrey who kept a firm arm around his waist, holding him upright.

It looked like Jaskier might pass out again at any moment. "Leshen," Geralt explained, relieved that his Jaskier looked unharmed, "it must have been mutated. It infected him, and he started to turn. He managed to use a djinn's magic to cast it out, but it nearly killed the both of us."

"Unpredictable monsters?" Nox commented mysteriously, and the other Jaskier...

Gods.

He'd forgotten just how horrific it was to see Jaskier that scared, in that much pain.

But the other Jaskier was staying far away from him, and Geralt had other people he needed to help first.

"Alright, let's bring *all* injured parties up to my labs," Yennefer announced, and Geralt winced at the sudden surge of fear coming from the other Jaskier.

"Jaskier," Geralt spoke, glancing over at the past Jaskier.

With whom he *didn't* have an understanding yet.

"If you just want to watch what she does, that's alright. I imagine Eskel will be her first priority. It would be good to see her work, to understand how she treats all her patients."

Yennefer pursed her lips, staying silent.

She'd forgotten Jaskier's deep seated fear of mages, in the wake of Rience.

Who...

Geralt glanced over at his Jaskier as they walked, frowning. "...You smell like magic, and fire."

"Rience is here," Jaskier explained, "Locked up in the dungeon. Last time, you killed him, since my magic protected you more than him. This time, we asked Yennefer to bring the potion the slavers used on me. We're hoping if past me takes it, it'll kill Rience and dissolve the bond without any extra pain."

There was so much of that statement that didn't make any sense.

But one thing stood out.

Rience was *here*.

The bastard he'd long wished to take his time killing slower, was here, and *still alive*.

He didn't want to follow.

*Desperately* didn't want to be anywhere near the mage.

But...

But.

His instinct was magic.

And it told him none of the people in that group wanted to do him harm, even the mage- as unlikely as that seemed.

And... there was a chance for some of his injuries to properly be seen to, not just the simple bandages and dressings he'd applied earlier.

He hadn't let on how injured he really was, but he had a feeling they'd known, and were simply being respectful.

So, at the back of the group, standing next to Aubrey, he trailed along.

Remus had taken over supporting his future self, who-

Had passed out from exhaustion earlier? That seemed odd.

Though, he *had* just had twins, so maybe this was an expected result of that- and hadn't slept the night before- this was making more sense as time passed.

"You're worrying rather hard," Aubrey commented, and Jaskier's step faltered.

"I don't like mages."

Aubrey nodded. "Understandable. Yennefer's earned my trust, but it makes sense for you to be scared of her. Promise you though: she won't lay a finger on you without getting through us."

A statement of loyalty that Jaskier didn't doubt.

What exactly had his future self done to earn such loyalty?

They made it up to the labs and the Witcher with white hair- *was this Geralt then?* – set down the other, injured Witcher, and Remus hauled the other Jaskier over to another cot to lie down.

Aubrey nodded to the back corner, where Jaskier could watch what Yennefer did without getting in the way.

He saw the Witcher he *assumed* to be Geralt take a seat next to other Jaskier's cot, picking up his hand and holding it close.

Other Jaskier smiled at him a bit, even as he lay down and tried to sleep.

"Don't go to sleep yet, lark," the mage commented, not looking up from where she was examining the other Witcher's arm. "You don't remember falling, I'll need to make sure you don't have a concussion."

"Oh fuck you," other Jaskier snarked with no real heat. "I'm tired, and apparently my body's finally alright with letting me sleep."

"Stay awake for me?" Geralt asked, and-

Damn.

Alright, Jaskier could see it. He *was* hot.

He turned his attention back to the mage, who was stepping back from the unconscious Witcher. “He’s going to live, but I can’t figure out what this thing *is* on his arm, let alone how to get it off. I don’t suppose any of you have experience with it?”

Vesemir stepped forward, examining the strange wood clinging to the Witcher’s arm, and Yennefer moved to other Jaskier, taking one of his hands and placing her hand over his head.

He eyes glowed faintly, and Jaskier couldn’t help his flinch, but other Jaskier seemed perfectly at ease.

“No concussion,” Yennefer declared, “just significant exhaustion. Here.” Her glowing increased, and other Jaskier relaxed a bit, sitting up. “That’s only to get you through the next few hours,” Yennefer cautioned. “Try not to do anything too strenuous.”

“I mean,” other Jaskier began, a twinkle in his eyes, “I *was* planning on taking a look at Eskel’s wounds, to see if I could figure out the plants?”

“That would be of great help,” Vesemir called over, “I’ve never seen anything like this. But don’t start if you’re not sure of what you’re doing.”

Other Jaskier grinned, getting to his feet, Geralt trailing behind him, and Yennefer slowly approached Jaskier.

“So. Any injuries you want me to treat?” she asked, and Jaskier swallowed.

Aubrey was still standing next to him, and Jaskier took a few breaths, before nodding. “I... ah... that would be nice?” he finally settled on.

Yennefer nodded towards yet another empty cot, and Jaskier followed her, sitting down on the cot, trying not to shake too much.

She held out her hand, and Jaskier swallowed, setting his hand in hers, trying not to think about it.

Her eyes glowed, and Jaskier *flinched*, but there was no pain.

Instead there was just a subtle blanketing feeling, followed by a gentle energy nudging at something inside his chest, until the pain *eased*, suddenly and startlingly, and he squeaked, yanking his hand out of Yennefer’s.

His *healed* hand.

He took stock of his own injuries mentally, and realized that he felt... *good*.

“*Thank you,*” he whispered, afraid that if he spoke any louder he might start crying.

“Of course. Now, we do have something to discuss,” she segued into, pulling up a chair. “I brought the potion that our Jaskier asked me to. You don’t have to take it,” she continued, before Jaskier could object, “but I’m going to explain what would happen if you did.”

Jaskier closed his mouth, nodding.

He could at *least* listen.

“Our Jaskier was forced to take it by the people we found it with. He didn’t choose it, but what happened when he took it was that it completely dissolved all traces of any bonds he’d ever been in. Both the cursed bond from Rience, and the bond he and Geralt shared years ago. He didn’t feel any lingering pains after, either. Now, he wasn’t conscious when he initially took the potion,”

“I was,” Aubrey interrupted. “It didn’t hurt. Plenty of other things they did to me hurt, but losing the bond... the only pain I felt was knowing that I couldn’t feel Remus anymore.” Glancing over at Jaskier, he tried to give a rueful smile. “Doesn’t seem like the kind of thing you’d miss.”

“So, I won’t be bonded to him anymore?” Jaskier asked. “And... my bond is what makes him immortal, so... he’ll be mortal again?”

“More than that,” his future self called over, “the only reason Geralt and Remus survived was that we’d bonded them back. You never bonded Rience. If the potion works the way it’s supposed to, he’ll die when you take it.”

Rience? Dead?

A tempting thought.

A *very* tempting thought.

“...what side effects are there?” he asked, though he knew he wouldn’t be told of any.

Other Jaskier straightened up from where he was working on the unconscious Witcher, crossing to kneel in front of Jaskier. “I promise you,” he said, as if he’d read Jaskier’s mind, “everything we know, we *will* tell you. You’re safe here.”

“What the bard said,” Yennefer included, arching an eyebrow at the other Jaskier, before shooing him away. “we’ll tell you everything we know, and you can think on it as long as you want.”

Jaskier glanced over at Aubrey, who nodded. “No side effects I noticed, though it was a little hard to tell, and I am a Witcher. But even if you do have side effects, we’ll be here to help you through them however we can.”

Jaskier nodded, and Yennefer left for a moment, before returning with a small vial.

It wasn’t red, like the potions Rience would force down his throat, but rather a soft tan color.



She pushed it into his hand. “The choice is yours. Think about it, and let one of us know if you decide to-“

Jaskier didn’t wait for her to finish talking. He’d already made his decision.

He uncorked the vial, and tossed the potion back.

## Chapter End Notes

I kind of wish this was a different fic of mine, that reached more of my audience, but this series does tend to be where I post about this, so here we go.

If you're not in America, bit of an update. Our president now is not beholden to any laws while in office. Essentially, he now has the power of a king. He can do anything without any consequence. This is very bad.

If you're in America, I know this is a terrifying time to be alive.

Please. Stay. Alive.

I don't have much I can offer to help, but what little I can do I am doing, and that includes writing every chance I get. Which I will be doing more and more. If things go very badly this November, I may increase my posting schedule dramatically, just so that we all have something small to look forward to each day.

If you want to talk to someone, my inbox is open. Here, Tumblr, Discord. This is terrifying, but we're not alone.

Have a wonderful day everyone.

# Chapter 11

## Chapter Summary

Eskel wakes up

## Chapter Notes

Well. I'm home sick from work today. Not great, but it is what it is.  
Enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

He knew he was home before he even opened his eyes.

The smells of Kaer Morhen were unmistakable, and he tried to relax into it, but...

There was something wrong.

"Careful," Jaskier whispered next to him, the bard's hands on his arm, but... he couldn't feel it. Not properly. "Careful, you're alright," Jaskier promised, speaking gently as though Eskel were a spooked horse.

Something was wrong.

Because he could *smell* Kaer Morhen, but he could also smell something else.

Pain.

Horrid pain and fear, *Jaskier's fear-*

"Careful, I promise I'm alright," Jaskier spoke, and Eskel opened his eyes, staring up at his old friend. "There you are. Geralt said we had some possession issues on the path?"

Eskel groaned, remembering the parasite, and the djinn. "What... what happened?" he asked, trying to sit up.

Jaskier placed a hand on Eskel's shoulder, keeping him still. "A lot," he began, "and Geralt knows more of it than I do, but everything's under control."

Everything's under control? What had happened *here*? "Jaskier?" he asked.

Jaskier glanced behind himself, and sighed. “Just... know that everyone’s safe. I imagine you can already smell him, you just haven’t realized that he’s not me.”

Not *him*? “Jaskier, what’s going on?”

Jaskier stepped back, allowing Eskel to sit up, and he did, glancing around the room till-

What.

*What?*

He glanced back to the Jaskier he’d seen when he first woke up, and *groaned*. “And here I thought magical orchard pregnancies would be the weirdest thing I’d seen,” he muttered, staring at *one* of the two Jaskier’s in the room. The other was asleep on another cot nearby. “What’s the story?”

“Time travel gone wrong,” Jaskier explained. “He’s me. Just... immediately after Rience.”

That explained the scent of pain.

Eskel moved to push himself further up, only to cry out as he put pressure on his arm.

He glanced down at his arm, to find that half of it was still encased in wood. “...fuck,” he muttered, and Jaskier nodded.

“I’ve been working on trying to remove what I can, but... it’s not good.”

“How ‘not good’ are we talking?”

“...First look? This thing severed several of your nerves. It didn’t intend for you to survive, and... I’m not sure your arm is ever going to recover.”

Eskel nodded, stamping down the surge of emotions he felt at hearing that.

It wouldn’t help anything.

The salty tang of tears filled the air, and he frowned, glancing over at Jaskier.

Jaskier who was *crying*. “I’m sorry,” he whispered, hands hovering over Eskel’s arm. “I- I’m so sorry. This is all my fault.”

What? “How could this possibly be your fault?” Eskel asked, but Jaskier shook his head.

“Nox... Nox said that the time travel had consequences. That when Haltijas mess with timelines, reality tears. Monsters from other worlds come through. The Leshen you fought... the others said there’d never been anything like that in our world before... this all happened because of me...”

Eskel reached his good arm up, tugging Jaskier closer and hugging him as he cried.

It made sense, honestly.

Whatever creature that had been, it *hadn't* been hunting humans before. It had to have been hunting some other food source.

"This wasn't on you," Eskel whispered as Jaskier clung to him. "I know you. You didn't mean for this to happen. I got hurt because a monster wanted to hurt me, not because of you."

"You should be with Ines," Jaskier sobbed, "spending time with your family, not... not recovering from a monster attack."

"I'm a Witcher, Jaskier. Fighting monsters is what we do, and we know the risks every time. I'm just glad everyone made it out alive."

He held Jaskier till he stopped crying, then Jaskier pulled back slowly, shaking his head. "I'm supposed to be comforting *you*," Jaskier bemoaned. "You're the one that was injured due to my mistakes."

Eskel *growled*. "Stop that. This 'time travel' is how you saved the other Jaskier, right? Then you were saving him from one of the worst fates on the continent. Any one of us would have made sacrifices to do the same."

"But... but your *arm*."

Eskel shook his head. "If it would have gotten you out of that hell faster, I would have cut my own arm off. I don't blame you for this, Jask."

Jaskier fell against him again, crying into his uninjured shoulder, and Eskel held him close.

This was only half the story, he was sure. But right now, Jaskier needed him.

At least this he could do without fucking it up.

Rience looked up from the searing pain tearing him apart and growled. "Here to gloat?" he rasped.

Not Jaskier tilted his head, smirking. "Usually I wouldn't risk being caught like this, but I just had to come see you before you died... or, rather, *as* you died."

"Fuck you."

"No, no, fuck you. You're being killed by a damn *dryad*."

"You died too, or you wouldn't be haunting this place so damned much."

"True," his old soulmate commented, "but at least I had a plan for when I eventually died. And I had the dignity to be killed by a *Witcher*. I'd say being killed by what I created means I created them well, don't you think?"

Rience tore his gaze up to the bars, even as the magic tore him apart. “You... created Witchers?” he asked.

“I know. Not my *finest* work, but... ah, well, I was young.” He chuckled. “Why do you think their little medallions haven’t detected me yet? I crafted them *not* to.”

It was getting harder to think, and Rience knew his time was almost up. “You... bastard...” he whispered, glaring up at his soulmate’s eyes, and for a moment, he swore he saw the black of his soulmate take over Jaskier’s startling blue.

Then he saw nothing more.

He hadn’t seen Jaskier for a little while.

He’d gone up to see Eskel once he’d woken up, and had stayed with him till the other Witcher had fallen asleep again.

Past Jaskier was asleep in the cot behind them, and Geralt took a deep breath, trying to ignore the scent of Jaskier’s fear and pain that *clung* to him.

It wasn’t *his* Jaskier that was scared of him.

Still, after the day he’d had, he needed to hold his Jaskier.

He stood up, heading into the hall, only to suddenly realize he had no idea where *his* Jaskier had gone.

It was hard to follow Jaskier’s scent when there were two of them, so instead he made his way down to the nursery for the twins, checking to see if Jaskier was there.

He wasn’t, but he paused for a minute to hold his two children.

Fuck, they were so *small*.

He remembered when Mel was that small- they were busy with Priscilla though. The two of them were close. Which was good, Mel needed women in their life to look up to, instead of the keep full of Witchers they’d been raised in.

Geralt sighed, setting down his twins and going once more to find Jask-

He stopped, staring at the *cat* that was seated outside the door to the nursery.

“...Hello?”

The cat meowed at him, before turning and walking away.

Geralt watched it leave, and shook his head. This wasn’t the important. He was looking for Jaskier, that was what was important-

The cat meowed at him again, this time more insistent.

Geralt turned to see it standing in the hall, glaring at him.

He approached, and it turned and walked a few paces, before turning and meowing at him again.

“You’re a strange one,” he commented, following the cat as it walked through the keep.

Every time he stopped, it turned and glared at him till he started walking again, till he saw Jaskier, lying on the ground, blood dripping from his nose.

“Fuck- *Jaskier*, ”

He lifted Jaskier into his arms, who stirred a bit, blinking in confusion. “Geralt?” he mumbled. “How...”

“Did you pass out again?” Geralt asked, and Jaskier blinked around himself.

“...I must have,” Jaskier concluded. “Let me down, I can walk-“

“This is the second time you’ve passed out today,” Geralt pointed out, “I’m carrying you upstairs so you can sleep, and getting Yennefer to make sure you don’t have a concussion.”

Jaskier sighed, but relented, allowing Geralt to carry him, and Geralt counted it as a win.

There was far too much chaos happening in this keep as it was.

He vaguely wondered if Lambert and Aiden had managed to avoid the chaos, or if they were struggling with some insanity of their own.

Far away from the keep, in Tretagor, Lambert and Aiden glanced at each other, concerned.

The contract was simple enough.

But what was with this overly flirty prince?

## Chapter End Notes

Yes, I'm adding Radovid in. Still working on figuring it out, but after watching season 3 I just want good things for that idiot. (Not the game or book version, JUST the show version)

# Chapter 12

## Chapter Summary

Some conversations are held

## Chapter Notes

Sorry this is so late!

I got sick again, and work was insane, and just... life happened? Sorry!

End notes aren't fic related, so if you're purely here for fanfiction and nothing else, feel free to skip it.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“There’s separate beds if you need them,” the prince explained to the pair of Witchers, “however, in *my* experience, the bed in the main room can *more* than handle a group or two.”

Right. More information than Lambert ever needed.

“Thank you for the tour, I believe we’ll be able to figure it out from here,” Aiden grinned, and not for the last time Lambert was glad for his soulmate’s skill with words.

“Of course of course,” the prince nodded, “far be it from me to overstay my welcome.”

*Then leave*, Lambert thought, but this was a *prince*, and it was far better to let Aiden do all the talking with royalty.

“You’re a quiet one, aren’t you?” the prince asked him, eyeing him up and down a bit.

Lambert crossed his arms. “People don’t like it when I talk,” he bit out.

The prince arched an eyebrow. “Oh? I don’t know, I think I’d like to hear what you have to say.”

“*Oh?*” Aiden asked, draping himself across Lambert’s back, *clearly* marking Lambert as his.

“I’ve heard the bard’s songs,” the prince continued, shifting tactics. “The great deeds of Witchers. What kinds of stories could you tell?”

Brilliant. One of Jaskier’s fans.

“Gorey ones,” Lambert commented, and the prince blinked.

“...Right. Ah, well, I should probably leave you to get some rest. What time did you say was best to hunt this thing?”

“We *didn't*, we still haven't identified it yet-“

“What my *soulmate* is trying to say,” Aiden cut in neatly, “is that we could definitely use the rest. We'll be doing our first investigation into this monster in the evening. Thank you *so* much for your hospitality.”

The prince smiled and nodded, bowing slightly as he left the room.

Lambert groaned a bit as Aiden pulled away from him. “The fuck was *that?* ” he asked, quiet enough that the guards stationed outside their door wouldn't hear him.

“Kudos to the little prince, he wasn't scared of us.”

“Since when are humans *aroused* by us anyway?” Lambert complained.

Aiden chuckled, pulling Lambert back to the bed. “Come on. We really should get some rest.”

“You sleep. I'll keep watch. Don't want both of us asleep till we've *left* this place.”

“Right,” Yennefer began the conversation, “there've been incidents all over the continent in the last two days of unknown monsters and other strange phenomenon, all of which seem to be leading back here. So: Jaskier, care to fill us in on what happened?”

Jaskier swallowed, standing up and facing his friends and family. “...While Geralt was on the path with Eskel and Priscilla, I decided to time travel. I'd been considering it for a while, but... I thought I was being safe. I consulted with Nox on how to do it, on what to do or what to avoid. My plan was to travel back to the day Geralt's mother abandoned him, and talk to her.”

“You spoke with Vissenna?” Geralt interrupted, and Jaskier winced.

“...’spoke with’ is... a bit strong. I meant to. I planned to talk to her, to try and find your old home, to try and rebuild those memories for you,” fuck it, he was speaking to Geralt now, everyone else was just listening. “I just... she refused to work with me. She was being a complete and utter *bitch*, and I just... Lost my temper. And punched her.”

Geralt stared at him. “...You punched Vissenna for me?”

“Of course I did. She was being a rude ass bitch.”

Geralt reached across the table and tugged Jaskier into a kiss, which Jaskier melted into. “*Thank you,* ” he whispered against Jaskier's lips, grinning. “I'm glad you did. She deserved



it.”

Jaskier tried to chuckle as he pulled back, but it came out a bit flat. “...That’s unfortunately where things went wrong. I was worked up, and pissed, and... when I went to travel back...” he sighed, hanging his head. “...I was thinking about what she’d done to you. How her abandonment would affect you, in future years. About how much pain you’d live through... it led me to Blaviken.”

“...How much did you see?” Geralt asked, growing pale.

“I saw you kill Renfri. I... you looked at me. Right at me. Then Stregobor was coming, and I portalled away, but...thinking about Blaviken reminded me of my own trauma at Rience’s hands. About the children I lost, and... then I was *there*. ” He took a breath, looking over at his past self. “I was *in* my own nightmares again, only they were real, and I could fight *against* him, and I... I couldn’t leave myself there. So, I restrained Rience, and got myself out of there. Only, Rience followed us through. Vesemir helped me restrain him, and then... well. Then I was able to think, and realized just what I’d done.”

Nox spoke up then. “What other phenomena have you seen, Yennefer?”

Yennefer sighed. “...There’s a portal, that opened in the throne room of Cintra. Neither Ciri nor I can close it, and no one can step through it. It’s just... sitting there. Triss stayed behind to keep an eye on it, and we both have xenovoxes in case it does something. I was about to reach out to Aretuza when I received your messages.”

“That does fall in line with the expected faults of crossing timelines.” Nox sighed. “Time travel is *strictly* regulated amongst Haltijas, for exactly this reason. It tears at the fabric of reality itself.”

“So it’s my fault,” past Jaskier muttered. “I shouldn’t be here. Because I’m here, people are going to die.”

That caused a series of responses.

“Of course not.”

“That’s ridiculous!”

“You don’t bear the blame here-“

“Someone does,” Jaskier pointed out, silencing everyone. “But they’re right. It’s not you. It’s me.”

“Stop arguing with yourself bard,” Yennefer called, smirking slightly at the irritated look Jaskier shot her way. “You said it yourself. This was an accident. And one that we’ll handle. And *you*, ” Yennefer turned to past Jaskier, “can calm down. This is *not* your fault, and you deserve a far better fate than the one you’ve had so far. Now. Rience is officially dead, and your bond removed. Shall we try sending you back to your own time now?”

Oh. That *would* be the next logical step.

Past Jaskier *didn't* belong here.

"I... what would I do?"

"Be a bard again?" Jaskier offered. "Your life is going to be different, yes, but maybe your soul words will come back once you're back in your own time?"

Eskel made an intrigued noise at that, and Jaskier made a mental note to ask him about it later.

"...Is... will the monsters go away, if I go back to my own time?"

Jaskier glanced over at Nox, who shrugged. "After the disaster that caused the convergence, we banned time travel. There's really no way of knowing."

He could see Geralt's confusion, and realized he'd have to explain that one to *Geralt* after the meeting.

There were a lot of extra conversations to be held.

"What do *you* want, little flower?" Yennefer asked, and past Jaskier swallowed, before nodding.

"...I want to go back to my own time. I... I want to live my *life* again."

Jaskier nodded. "Alright then. Are you ready?"

Past Jaskier swallowed, but nodded. "Yes. Yes, I'm ready."

Jaskier stood up, crossing to the center of the hall, and focusing his energy.

This would be simple enough. Going back to the moment he pulled himself from, and then from there creating just a standard portal to Redania, to the forest he'd been born to.

He closed his eyes, focusing on the energy and creating a portal-

Only to be blasted across the hall, his magic dissolving into that much dust.

Geralt was by his side in an instant, helping him sit up. "What happened?"

Jaskier shook his head, clearing the ringing in his ears. "I... don't know."

Yennefer scowled. "The portal refused to be opened. Odd. I've never seen it do that before."

Nox sighed. "...If I'd wager a guess, I'd say his presence has now been written into *this* timeline. There's something else here that needs to be finished." He glanced over at the past Jaskier, grimacing. "Sorry, young one. It seems you're stuck here for the moment."

Those of us living in America...

How're we all doing?

Everyone okay? I'm thinking of upping my posting schedule a bit to try and give all of us something to look forward to. Give a little... structure, maybe? In this mayhem? A coping mechanism of sorts.

Please take care of yourself today!

# Chapter 13

## Chapter Summary

Eskel talks to the others

## Chapter Notes

I hope everyone's doing well

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Lambert and Aiden left the palace, only to *glare*.

“*Fuck* no,” Lambert growled, but Aiden elbowed him to try and keep the swearing down.

No need to insult royalty, after all. Save it till after they’d been paid. “Please tell me you’re not planning on coming *with*. ”

The prince blinked, surprised. “Oh, would I be in the way?”

“*Horribly*, ” Lambert growled.

“It’s only- I thought, maybe I could help? Not with the monster slaying bit, clearly I’ve no skill with that, but if I’m with you, then you could get answers from people easier? And if there’s any supplies you’d need? I could buy them for you? Really, it’s the least we could do to help.”

How *very* interesting. Most of the time royalty weren’t nearly so ‘helpful’. “And why you?” Aiden asked. “Surely, if the crown were so insistent on helping, there’d be other ways of doing so that wouldn’t inconvenience the prince?”

The prince shook his head. “Please, call me Radovid. And really, it’s no trouble. I just happened to be the person available. All the guards are busy with their assigned duties.”

*Lie.*

Lambert scowled, and Aiden leaned against him, wrapping an arm around his shoulder. “And what about you? Don’t you need a guard?”

Radovid scoffed. “What could guards protect me from that a Witcher cannot?”

“You trust us that much?” Lambert asked, derisively.

Radovid nodded hastily. “I’ve heard the songs. Witchers are noble beyond all honor of men or elves.”

Aiden and Lambert glanced at each other. What the *fuck* had their lark been writing?

Eventually, Lambert sighed. “Just... stay out of the way, and don’t get fucking injured. Not on us if this fucker eats you.”

Not the *best* he could have phrased that, but the sentiment was right.

They made their way into the city, the eager prince trailing along behind them.

He felt better.

The potion had erased the bond as if it never happened, and between that and Yennefer’s healing, Jaskier was beginning to feel like himself again.

Himself, as he no longer was.

Mel and other Jaskier had been right, staring out the window was a great help, but he still felt lost.

Adrift.

He was safe now, and he didn’t know what that meant.

Safe to what?

Rience could no longer hurt him, yes, but... this was *other* Jaskier’s life. Not his.

Other Jaskier had a soulmate, and a family, and these wonderful friends. Not him.

He was a stranger, intruding on their sanctuary, with no purpose.

He glanced over as someone knocked on the door, surprised to see Geralt.

“...He used to stare out that window too,” Geralt commented, taking a seat on the bed. “Spent hours sitting there till we started to worry he’d catch on fire.”

Jaskier nodded, unsure what *exactly* the point was in this.

“But you’re not him.” There it was. The problem that all of this boiled down to. “And that’s alright. You don’t have to be.”

...what?

“Just focus on who you want to be, now, and what you want to do. We’ll find a way to get you back to your time. Until then, be kind to yourself, and let us know if there’s anything you need.”

Jaskier relaxed a bit, and nodded, and then Geralt was leaving the room.

That... was good advice, really.

Be kind to himself.

Focus on what he wanted to *do*.

He wasn’t this other version of himself. He might have become him, before all of this, but now...

*Two diverging paths, where destiny runs out,*

*No battle cries ahead, my thoughts are plagued with doubt-*

Oh, that had been a while.

He sat up, tapping his fingers against the wood of the chair.

It had been a *long* while since his inspiration had come to him, and he’d thought that part of himself gone, but maybe...

Maybe.

He stood up, deciding very quickly that he needed quill and paper.

He wasn’t about to let the first inspiration in *years* pass him by.

“Alright,” Jaskier walked into the room, casting a glance behind him. “I just saw past me on a search for paper, so I’m pretty sure *his* inspiration came back, Geralt, what did you tell him?”

Geralt shrugged. “To be himself.”

Jaskier sighed. “Alright. Eskel? What did you want to discuss with us?”

Eskel at least was looking better, now that they’d finished getting the wood off his arm, but it still looked... wrong. “So, as Geralt explained, I was possessed, and found a djinn at the same time. The... Leshen, for lack of a better understanding- took one of the wishes to seize control, and I used a wish to get it out for good. But before that, I used one other wish, on accident. I wished to see the end. I meant that I wanted everything to be over, with the parasite, and to be alive on the other side of it. The djinn didn’t interpret it as such.” He took a breath, letting it out. “I saw the end. Of... *everything*. None of it makes any sense, but... I saw myself die. Far older than have any right to live. I saw what I now know *has* to be the other Jaskier, going back to his own world. I saw... gods, I think I saw the end of the *sphere*.

None of it makes sense, but..." he frowned. "I saw you two. Jask, you were injured. Unconscious or dead, I don't *know*, but you were in the main hall... Geralt knelt next to you, fuck, Geralt you were *weeping*, and I don't- fuck, I don't know *when* that happens, but I saw the end of the parasite, too. It happened *exactly* as I saw- I have no reason to believe the other things I saw are anything but the truth."

Oh, poor Eskel.

Jaskier reached over, hauling Eskel into a hug, before reaching his arm out and hauling Geralt into a hug as well.

"Whatever you saw," Jaskier whispered, "we'll face it when it comes. For right now, we're here. We're *alive*. Nothing else is certain."

"But what if you die?" Eskel asked, and- fuck, there were *tears* tracing down his face. "What if something happens, something we could have prevented, and you die? What if I watch it happen?"

"What if by trying to avoid that fate, we bring it about?" Geralt countered. "You said you saw the other Jaskier go back to his time, what if that's his fate, and not ours? You saw an ending. Not anything that led to it."

"What Geralt means," Jaskier added, still holding his Witchers close, "is that while we'll keep it in mind, even if we *do* encounter that fate, it won't be your fault."

Eskel held Jaskier closer with his good arm, and Geralt held them both together.

"I can't lose you," Eskel finally managed. "Neither of us can."

"I don't have any plans of going anywhere," Jaskier promised. "Whatever the future holds, we'll face it, no matter what endings come."

This wasn't good.

He'd thought he had enough control over the spirit's magic, but apparently taking over to talk to Rience had depleted his powers more than he thought.

He needed to make sure the spirit used its magic again. But how?

Rience was dead, and it was *safe*.

More than that, the mage had already declared the Witcher's arm unsalvageable, so the spirit wouldn't spend any energy trying to heal the Witcher...

He needed a plan.

The time travel had worked well enough to spark several chances to use its magic, but the portals were rejecting it now, time itself too pissed to allow for such usage.

He had to tread carefully, but there had to be a way...

Oh, that was an idea.

The younger spirit was clearly insecure in its own powers. Perhaps, with the right nudge, the spirit might use its power to teach the younger one.

An idea, certainly. Something to keep the magic flowing, at least.

And if that failed, well.

It wasn't as if he didn't have time.

## Chapter End Notes

Fair warning, I've been trying to write the next chapter for the last 4 months, so it might be a little while till I get the next part out, I promise I'm working on it I've just had a lot going on.

Thank you for your patience!



## End Notes

I'm still writing this, so I'm planning on doing one update per week, but once I finish the fic I may be increasing that timeframe.

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